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AUG 11 1941

THE NEW

STATESMAN AND NATION

The Week-end Review

Vol. XXI. No. 537 [Incorporating THE ATHENÆUM] SATURDAY, JUNE 7, 1941 [Registered at the G.P.O. as a newspaper] SIXPENCE

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CRETE-CAIRO EXPRESS

Events will quickly show what plans were made by Hitler and Mussolini at their meeting this week on the Brenner Pass. Indeed, even now it is only the schematic details of which we are in ignorance: whether an air-borne assault on Cyprus is to precede or follow the German occupation of Syria, what functions and timetable are assigned to Admiral Darlan's fleet, at what stage the Axis will move against Gibraltar. The conception of the German High Command is already clear: its objective is the destruction of our military and naval forces based on the Suez Canal; and the means are a simultaneous invasion of Egypt from Lybia and through Palestine, while a spur of the enemy's Middle East Army extends towards both Mosul and Basra, and the Atlantic exit from the Mediterranean is closed, in co-operation, perhaps, with the French fleet, by action from Spain or Dakar, or both. The British Staff must long have foreseen such a German plan; we must hope that they are better prepared to forestall it than they were in Crete.

The loss of Crete may not have been such a major catastrophe as our defeat by General Rommel in Libya; that was a crucial action, since from the flying-fields of Benghazi and Derna the defence of Crete by air would have been much easier. But to belittle the enemy's achievement in successfully invading Crete is to adopt the posture of the ostrich. We have once more suffered reverse on a big scale, and the German victory is highly important in that he has now gained a position from which the *Luftwaffe* can operate simultaneously against Syria, Haifa, Alexandria and Tobruk. A post-mortem is not merely permissible, but vital if we are to arrest further disaster.

What cost us Crete, or, rather, when did we finally lose Crete? The answer is plain: we lost Crete when the Air Command in the Middle East decided that the fighter and bomber aircraft based on the island must be evacuated, for self-preservation. From that moment onwards our military and naval forces on and around Crete operated with odds hopelessly against them. Whatever may be thought of the conduct of the Command in Crete, individual fighting men and units withstood and did all that men can withstand and do. But the position had already been lost by the failure to prepare the defences of the island. Maleme might have been mined, better lines of defence might have been constructed west of Canea and east of Heraklion, and the island's defensive material in terms of A.A. guns, field artillery and tanks might have been less sketchy than it seems to have been. It seems, however, unlikely that land forces, even greatly strengthened, could ultimately have withstood assault by the *Luftwaffe* without strong support from the R.A.F. Even supposing that to retain the R.A.F. in Crete, necessarily in far less strength than the *Luftwaffe*, would have meant in the end the total loss of the British machines involved, the real choice was between that loss or abandoning altogether the defence of the island. Who took this grave decision? Was it the Military or Air Command? In these combined operations are the British still suffering from a dual and un-coordinated control?

In detail the Cretan campaign raises many questions and points to more than one moral. Making every allowance for improvement of weather, we may still ask how the Germans continued to launch hundreds of aeroplanes from fields which we had to evacuate as unusable, a fortnight earlier, on the mainland of Greece. Why, in the six preparatory months at our disposal, did we not succeed in establishing in Crete aerodromes more numerous and better defended, or at least prepared by mining for denial of their use by the enemy? Setting aside the question on which (until more is known) judgment must be suspended—why we sacrificed thousands of men in defending an island which, presumably, we knew we could not (or, at least, did not try to) defend from the air—we have still to seek an answer to the question: why has Britain nothing better than one more Dunkirk to her credit?

The enemy, as witness the graphic despatches of an Australian war correspondent to the *Times*, developed new methods in Crete. To parachutists were added troops landed by glider. With these the defenders could cope; their casualties were high, their offensive power patchy. What took the defence completely by surprise was the rate at which, after intensive dive-bombing, the attack could land powerfully armed units by means of troop-carriers built by mass-production for one journey and crashed down—regardless of resultant losses—on the single airfield won by the glider-troops and parachutists. The special brigades thus landed had the support of an air-force which

acted, artillery-wise, both for battery and counter-battery work, as well as functioning as a supply column and an offensive arm against the British fleet. The result was a British army straggling over the mountains to the south coast. It is perhaps significant that the *Times*, which carried this brilliant and informative despatch, also printed a report from Cairo which talked of the "dangerously unorthodox" methods of the Germans. Dangerous to whom?

As was said in these columns last week, conditions in Crete do not correspond completely to those in Great Britain from the aspect of invasion. We may well ask whether our coastal flying-fields are adequately protected, and whose job it is to be responsible (directly, and not, in that fatal phrase, *en liaison*) for providing a sufficient establishment of light A.A. gunners, infantry, sappers *and heavy tanks* for aerodrome defence. Nevertheless, important though it be to improve our present standards, the essential factor is that the outcome of battle depends on local air superiority. In Britain we may fairly be confident of ability to deny that to the enemy. Can we make a similar profession in relation to Cyprus, Palestine, Egypt itself?

The Australian press, viewing objectively and from a distance the losses in Greece and Crete, where Anzac brigades were murdered from the air, is asking pertinently whether it is worth while endeavouring to hold Egypt if the upshot is to be yet another evacuation under Stuka-bombing. The answer is surely that if, and only if, our air resources in the Middle East can be made sufficient to enable us to hold on, then the attempt should be made. With each advance, German communications become more extended; Cyprus—even if Syria joins the Axis—is much nearer than Crete to British air bases in Palestine; and though the dead hand of our antique and irresolute Foreign Office has left Syria wide open to the Axis, British infantry in Crete have given a fortnight in which to liquidate Raschid Ali in Baghdad and transport many brigades from Abyssinia to Egypt. If the apex of the Crete–Cyprus–Alexandria triangle is not to be defended to the death, we yield to Hitler the oil of the Middle East and abandon our last chance of victory.

So, fight we must in the Middle East, even though hopes reposed on Turkey now seem nebulous and Imperial backs are, indeed, to the wall. It is the situation which confronted England in May, 1918, with the qualification that the invasion of this island was then almost impossible. To-day it is merely a tactic which the enemy, victorious in Crete and not yet repulsed in the Battle for the Atlantic, seems likely to postpone. We need men at the top who are alive to "dangerously unorthodox" methods and know that they must always be prepared for the effect of surprise which the Germans gain by succeeding in doing what the experts assume to be technically impossible. The impression made on every occasion in which the British have met the German army in this war is that the British Command is in the hands of strategists, administrators and generals who have neither the training nor adaptability to cope with a war whose methods the German General Staff has revolutionised.

A Misguided Report

In the imminent debate in the House on civil defence services those who have a Geddes Axe to grind will be able to make mischief with the recent and most unfortunate report of the Select Committee on National Expenditure. This is the report which recommends drastic economies in these services. It is a flat-footed and ill-judged document which shows no grasp of the realities of a "blitz." For the sub-committee to suggest, after all we have been through, that it is excessive to employ a quarter of a million whole-time workers to cover all branches of civil defence is dangerous folly. It makes the point that these workers cost £39,750,000 of the £89,000,000 spent by the Exchequer for all civil defence services during the past financial year, but "manpower" is also used as an argument. So it is proposed to get rid of as many as possible of the full-time workers and replace them with volunteers. A special point is made of the Casualty Services, because the killed and injured have not been as numerous as was originally expected. The sub-committee seems only vaguely to realise, although it is surely obvious enough, that there are limits to the capacity of volunteers to respond to demands. So it proposes that people should be compelled under Defence Regulation 26A to take part-time service for any A.R.P. work. Again, this shows no conception of how this kind of compulsion operates. Where it has been used for fire-watching it has been found that it barely increases the number. In some places it has actually reduced it. The reason is that a compulsory order has to exempt those who are already doing other types of service—Home Guard duty, and so on, with the result that many who were quite willingly doubling, or even trebling, their service by turning out as Home Guards on Sundays and wardens on Mondays and fire-watchers on Tuesdays, drop out. If the committee had probed a little deeper it would have found that, so far from reducing the whole-time personnel, compulsory part-time service actually increases it; there have to be more N.C.O.s for supervision purposes. Volunteers, however willing, are unreliable, because increasingly more and more are working overtime in industry, or A.R.P. mothers have had to evacuate with the family, or military duty has made its claims. The report is full of similar half-baked, ill-digested proposals, which is the more unfortunate because it follows a long series of extremely useful documents which had encouraged the belief that the Select Committee was one of the best parliamentary institutions that had come out of the war. Yet this is the report which most closely affects the general public, for whom the committee is the watchdog, and it is the one in which the evidence is based, not on official secrets confided to the committee, but upon experience which the public has shared. The House should tell Herbert Morrison to ignore it.

The Home Front (*From our Industrial Correspondent*)

As far as the general public was concerned, the Board of Trade sprung its surprise last Sunday very effectively. In view of the prospective shortage of supplies, the case for rationing clothes is conclusive; and this is plainly a case in which it is of the first importance that there should be no chance of rushing to the shops in order to buy before rationing comes in. Use had therefore to be made of a page of spare coupons from the food book, as an interim measure; and the whole scheme had to be rough and ready, so that retailers would find little difficulty in applying it without previous notice. Inevitably, the rationing of clothes leads to great difficulties because needs vary widely. The exemption of goods for children under four years of age is plainly right; and it was also sensible to make a child's garment correspond to fewer coupons than an adult's. But where is the line drawn between a child and an adult? Boys and girls do not stop growing out of their clothes when they cease to be children in the ordinary sense of the term. Again, it was plain common sense to exempt boiler-suits; but the scheme appears to pay all too little regard to the needs of workers whose clothes and boots undergo severe occupational wear and tear.

* * *

The new rationing will mean considerable hardship for small shops, which will find it very difficult to maintain themselves on a greatly reduced turnover. This, however, is properly a result not of the rationing but of the antecedent limitation of supplies. The announced control of prices is, however, an essential safeguard for the success of the scheme, for otherwise it is to be presumed that traders will do all they can to recoup themselves by higher prices for the fall in turnover. If this were allowed to occur, the apparent equity of the scheme between rich and poor will disappear, for the poorer people will not be able to afford the clothes they are allowed to buy. It is disingenuous to suggest, as the semi-official announcements do, that families with incomes of up to £3 a week will be able to buy more clothes than before, and those with between £3 and £4 roughly the same amount. This assumes that the cheaper lines will be available, and that prices will not rise, whereas it will be plainly to the retailer's interest to concentrate on the more expensive lines, on which margins are normally larger. Actually the £3 a week man will suffer in another way too, since the man with a small income who cannot afford the cost of a good suit of clothes will use his coupons on shoddy material and have no coupons with which to replace it when he has saved up his money for another shoddy suit. The remedy is to produce good standard lines at fixed prices. These are not *necessarily* criticisms of the Board of Trade, as it seems to be going on promptly to control prices and to make provision for the special needs to which I have referred. But the scheme announced on Sunday is only satisfactory if it is part of a more comprehensive scheme.

* * *

It is impossible to get an effective mobilisation of American industry for the war effort without a solution of the labour conflict, which is seriously holding up production both in the aircraft industry and in the shipyards. Yet many of the big American employers are still viciously anti-trade union; and in many plants the same spirit runs right down through every grade of management. Labour espionage is still widespread; and punitive savaging is still extensively practised as a means of defeating unionisation. How long will it take American business to realise that Trade Unionism is just as essential an instru-

ment of " liberal democracy," for which they profess to be enthusiastic, as Parliament or Congress, or any part of the democratic machinery of government? Some time soon the President will have to grasp this nettle. He could grasp it much more easily if only the A.F. of L. and the C.I.O. would come to terms; but he will have to grasp it even if they do not.

Retrospect on the Session (*by a Parliamentary Correspondent*)

The Whitsuntide recess provides an opportunity of making a broader survey of the parliamentary scene than these notes normally permit. From the point of view of Parliament, Phase I of the war ended nearly twelve months ago with the fall of the Chamberlain Government. That administration was formed in peacetime, and even its strongest supporters admit to-day that it was wholly unsuited for the ruthless task of waging totalitarian war. Churchill had the choice, because of his enormous personal prestige, of forming a Government of men selected for their capacity regardless of their party affiliations or of building his Cabinet from the nominees of the three political parties. He chose the latter course. This was Phase II, which is now drawing to its close.

What makes Phase III inevitable? In the period which immediately followed our defeat in France, the Churchill administration performed the vital task of pushing up the production of planes and other armaments from the previous fantastically low level of output. Perhaps its highest point was reached when the Prime Minister decided to send out of this country strong reinforcements to Egypt. But that is not enough. Totalitarian war is a grim orchestra which becomes a meaningless disorganised jumble unless every player has the capacity to play his part under the baton of a clear-sighted, determined leader. Unfortunately the Churchill administration is too much a band of individual players with their conductor. However brilliant the genius of the virtuoso he cannot, by himself, give a coherent rendering of the difficult piece he is attempting to play.

Has any single member of the Cabinet established himself during the last twelve months as an exceptional wartime minister? One could not say that of any of the Service Ministers, though they show capacity in administration and tend increasingly to become more Churchillian in phrase and speech. Bevin, a man of great reputation and full of character, came fresh to Cabinet office and to the House. In an office which more than any other, except the Prime Minister's, requires a ruthless determination to achieve his ends even at the cost of his own popularity, Bevin seems too concerned with his popularity and not clear enough in the lead he should give to labour. He has given vent to occasional outbursts against employers on the floor of the House, but he is very cautious about giving them orders even on vital matters affecting production. Morrison is a capable administrator, but his vision is limited by the field in which he established his reputation. Duncan also is a sound administrator, but he, too, suffers from the limitations imposed upon his outlook by his previous experience. Greenwood is already on the shelf, and a number of other Ministers who need not be specified may join him there as the necessity of more drastic organisation grows more obvious. Attlee, Duff Cooper, Lyttelton, Ramsbotham, Brown and Sir Kingsley Wood all fail in different ways to make the impact that is required in this crisis. They may be good politicians and quite competent administrators for normal times. But these times are not normal.

To-day there is a growing realisation on all sides of the House that war against a Totalitarian enemy demands the ruthless sacrifice of vested interests. To-day in every department the vested interests from trade unionism, through the big industrialists to the old school tie, are in control. Not that they consciously obstruct the war effort, but they cannot be expected to realise that self-immolation is vital if we are to avoid defeat. Thank God our governing classes are not financially corrupt or ridden by domestic and sex intrigues, as the French were. We suffer from a far more subtle form of corruption which is sapping the roots of our power—the corruption of social connections and an easy-going inheritance which has assumed that the palm can be won without the dust.

To cut through all obstructions to the full development of our war effort would demand something like a peaceful revolution. We need not go the way of revolutions before war broke out—Germany, Italy or Russia—but we must follow them in ridding ourselves of the grip of vested interests. Even the U.S.A. has had a half-revolution during the New Deal. Roosevelt has surrounded himself by men of unorthodox views whom he not infrequently changes. Will the Prime Minister prove his capacity for leadership by a voluntary reconstruction of his Government, or will Phase III be brought into being by the pressure of events?

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SEA POWER AND LAND POWER

MOST nations have a " myth," or, as the French would call it, a *mystique*, which is a popular conception to reassure themselves against a sense of insecurity. In the last war the Germans firmly believed in an invincible German army, and Hitler has gone to all lengths of mendacity to maintain this myth and to attribute Germany's defeat to the Jews and the Marxists, and, indeed, to everyone except the army. Between the two wars the French myth was the Maginot Line, which they believed in so firmly that they did not even extend it along the Belgian frontier. The British belief in sea power goes deep into our history and the whole psychology of this country is based on the insular faith that as long as we maintain command of the seas Britain is unconquerable. For years before the war, a few experts were far-sighted enough to see that the development of air power threatened the supremacy of naval strength; and the experience of last summer did at length awaken this country to the fact that conquest by air was not impossible, and that our security against Germany depended upon the production of aircraft and on the supplies of aeroplanes from the United States.

Nevertheless the myth dies hard. The story of Norway was not enough to kill it, nor was the discovery that a blockade in which the sea and air combine is more effective than the *U*-boat campaign of the last war. Crete was a test case. The Navy as well as the Army were subjected to the impossible task of fighting against dive-bombers without the support of fighter aeroplanes; the naval losses in the Eastern Mediterranean have been heavy and the lesson is clear that the war in Syria, Palestine, the Suez and Egypt now depends not so much on the Navy's capacity to prevent sea landings, as on the number of British aeroplanes available, on the efficiency of aerodromes and the adequacy of their anti-aircraft defences. The Service Departments have been slow to realise that this is a war in the air. It was with the utmost difficulty that the Air Ministry was ever persuaded to allow the Navy to form its own air arm; without that air arm the *Bismarck* would never have been sunk and the Navy would often be paralysed. Even to-day, while the German air force works in seemingly perfect co-ordination with the army, the British Air Force remains a separate unit and seems scarcely better co-ordinated with the Army than it was in the disaster of the Western Front a year ago.

When the story of the last ten years comes to be written, the historian is likely to find in this myth of sea power one of the most important explanations of the futility of British policy. Naval superiority in the nineteenth century made Britain a great Power even without the help of allies. To-day, Britain's position as an invulnerable Great Power has vanished with the diminution of the sea as a defensive barrier, although with an adequate development of air strength, the British Empire is still a great Power, while the British Empire plus a fully developed United States may yet be invincible. But the tradition of the Navy stated in classical form in Mahan's *Sea Power* enabled British statesmen to maintain the illusion that Britain could wash its hands of the Continent and still remain impregnable. Had that illusion not existed, had it been realised that British strength was really dependent on her capacity to lead an alliance of Powers, we might have avoided the follies which destroyed the League of Nations. As it was, all those who hated the idealistic aspects of the League, who disliked the idea of subordinating British foreign policy to the requirements of a world order, were able to destroy Britain's security and leave us isolated in face of the greatest land power in history. Some of us did our best to explain that the League was not a Utopian conception of a few idealists, but a highly practical combination of Powers united to defend the world from the threat of an aggressor nation. Our rulers and some sections of the press would insist on regarding it as the invention of Utopians and busybodies. In truth, the realists were the defenders of the League, and as everyone must see to-day when Britain is without allies in Europe, the isolationists were the dwellers in cloud cuckoo-land.

Some of those who were active when the League was founded, understood clearly enough what was at stake. Let us recall, for instance, the warning of an eminent scholar who wrote at the time of the Versailles Conference a book which was neglected in this country, but noted all too well in Germany. In *Democratic Ideas and Reality*, published in 1919, Sir Halford Mackinder pointed out that after winning a war " for democracy " it was essential to safeguard the position of " the democracies." The ideals we wished to foster by the League would only be secure if the fundamental facts of history and geography were remembered when the Treaty was made. In a masterly summary he pointed out that for long periods of history invaders had poured down to the sea fringes from the vast centres of population in the heart of the European-Asiatic continent. He

showed how, in one period after another in history, sea power had sufficed to maintain the independence of an island or peninsula as long as the naval bases were secure, but that one sea power after another had fallen when its bases were captured by land forces. He warned Britain that the air might be a factor in this land and sea battle in the future and that the allies had been lucky in not having against them the joint resources of Germany and Russia. Were we sure, he asked, in our moment of victory that that gigantic combination of land power might not yet come into being and overwhelm us? At the Versailles Conference fear of Bolshevism in Russia and above all of its spread to Germany, was enough to ensure the creation of a system of Eastern European States which were designed as a buffer between the two great land Powers. After 1933 the assumption that Russia and Germany were permanently enemies and the easy delusion that Hitler would make war on Russia rather than on the Western Powers, lulled the allied statesmen into a fatal slumber. But Sir Halford Mackinder's warning to Britain had been taken very seriously indeed by the Nazi group, and General Haushofer and his friend Hess impressed on Hitler the lesson that Germany must not again fight on two fronts and that she must either first conquer Russia or obtain Russia as a benevolent neutral. Hess's flight to this country and General Haushofer's arrest may seem to confirm the view that Hitler now definitely prefers the pact with Russia and the war against the West; or, if Mr. Ernest Bevin is right, and Hess's arrival here is collusive, then it may still be Hitler's object to persuade Britain into acceptance of the New Order in Europe on the assumption that that would be the easiest way of gaining his ends both in the East and West. Whatever interpretation of Hitler's present policy is accepted, however, it remains clear that he is determined either by conquest or by temporary pact to safeguard his backdoor and to use Russia's resources for his final onslaught on the West.

When we consider this story, the behaviour of our rulers in throwing away chance after chance of co-operation with Soviet Russia must stand out as a landmark of human folly. The highly precarious position of Britain to-day is a direct result of Britain's deliberate cold-shouldering of the U.S.S.R. In this at least we agree with a correspondent in our columns this week. We may differ about the times when Stalin was anxious for collaboration with Britain. But the fact remains that Britain had nothing to lose and everything to gain by close relations with the U.S.S.R. and that barrier after barrier was erected in this country. At every stage in the story outlined by our correspondent, this journal has urged that Britain should run any risk of prestige—and what other risks were there?—in the endeavour to obtain that vitally necessary collaboration with the U.S.S.R. which had been disastrously refused when it was certainly available. It may be, as we incline to believe, that after the dismissal of Litvinov, and Britain's refusal to attend the proposed Conference at Bucharest, when Hitler marched to Prague, Stalin never seriously entertained the idea of a British alliance. It must however be remembered that Stalin was banking on a fight on equal terms between Germany and the Western Powers; that he is no friend of Hitler's and knows well that the defeat of Britain will mean the invasion of Russia. As the danger to Britain grows, it is still possible that Russian neutrality may grow less friendly to Germany and less hostile to ourselves. If the sands have really run out and Russia has finally decided that the democratic Powers are not worth while or not trustworthy as friends, then indeed, Sir Halford Mackinder's warning that we should find ourselves confronted with a vast land power which could not be blockaded and whose airforce can leap over our Navy, has been only too terribly fulfilled.

If this is indeed the situation, the immediate issue of the war is the possibility of the survival of this country as an outpost of American and Empire power on the edge of the European-Asiatic Continent. Viewed as a purely military problem there is no very obvious solution. Mr. Eden's speech last Thursday was an advance on any previous speeches of the British Government. It showed a less insular and more constructive mind. The same thoughts might have carried more weight in the mouth of a speaker with a gift for the fresh and telling phrase. The fine words to which Mr. Eden gave utterance have lost much of their content from frequent and often insincere repetition. But we believe that Mr. Eden does understand that if we consider this war as a purely national affair we are engaged in an absurd struggle. The world is being reshaped; the old grouping of sovereign nations and the old talk of their integrity and independence has been put out of date by the aeroplane, the wireless and the mechanised column. The conclusion, as Sir Halford Mackinder said in his book in 1919 was, that the conditions were present for the construction, by conquest or agreement, of a world state. The experiment of the League, which was the last effort to apply the Liberal idealism of the nineteenth century to foreign affairs and to solve the age-long problem of national war by the process of reason was destroyed by the short-sighted and class-ridden beliefs of national leaders. To-day, because we failed to unite Europe by reason and co-operation, Hitler is uniting it by force and fraud. We resist his attempt, not because the object of forming a New Order in Europe is bad, but because Hitler offers not an order but the domination of a single race and a social system and the enthronement of values which are repugnant to every civilised person on the Continent. That resistance to a Nazi Europe and a Nazi world will continue whatever happens in the war, wherever men love freedom and cherish the right to think, to worship or, indeed, to exist without the permission of a *Gauleiter*. It is this social evil of Fascism, and especially of its German form, which we have to resist. Our remaining hope, if the U.S.S.R. must be counted as permanently neutral, must be in the combination of this hatred of Nazi domination and the physical power of the combined resources of the British Empire and the United States. The example of Napoleon is of more use than are most historical analogies, for Napoleon, like Hitler, carried an idea with him as his armies marched through Europe. If he had really offered the common people freedom and equality when he destroyed feudalism, he might have succeeded in uniting Europe under French leadership; but because his conquests proved to be merely the selfish plundering of a single Power, the very forces of liberty which he had summoned to his support turned against him, and the nationalism which was his battle-cry proved in one country after another to be his downfall. The story of Hitler may well be similar. If he succeeds in destroying the selfishness and inefficiency of the small State and implanting in Europe the conception of a unity and of an economic order, that conception must survive when his own tyranny, which makes a mockery of his promises, is overthrown.

WHAT IS REGIONALISM?

ALMOST everyone agrees that our existing areas of local government are obsolete, foolish and inconvenient, that local rates are a prodigiously unjust kind of tax, and that the composition both of our local councils and of our municipal civil service leaves much to be desired. It is further agreed that these faults of our existing system have been made much more serious by the upsets of war, and that they will be a monstrous nuisance if we allow them to persist into the period of reconstruction—a period which, as Lord Reith and Mr. Arthur Greenwood exist to remind us, is already beginning. It is further agreed that local self-government should be the school for national democracy, and that a people which cannot manage the parish pump efficiently stands very little chance of managing successfully its larger public affairs.

All this is agreed; but when it comes to proposing remedies, agreement abruptly ends. Manchester and Salford, Newcastle and Gateshead, Brighton and Hove, are not really cities, but fragments of cities which are meaninglessly divided up into separate administrative units. But propose to amalgamate them, and what a fuss there will be! Propose that the boundaries of administrative London, which remain to-day where they were fixed in 1855, shall be widened to cover the real London of 1941, and you will have a host of county, borough and other urban authorities clamouring that no such change can be made without sheer disaster. Propose that some attempt shall be made to rearrange local government areas in relation to the realities of modern urban life and communal service, and you will be told that you are a time-wasting ideologist, who will keep interrupting busy administrators instead of letting them get on, undisturbed, with their jobs.

Everyone has known about the absurdity of local rates and local boundaries for at least a generation. Royal Commissions have sat upon the subject, and produced either inconclusive reports or, sometimes, no reports at all. There have been proposals for unifying the government of Tyneside, of urban Glamorgan, of Greater London, and of a number of other places. Committees have been set up to report upon what can be done to implement the reports of previous committees. But nothing has been done—or rather nothing had been done—until the coming of war.

War presented us with a kind of so-called "Regionalism," embodied in the Defence Regions set up under Regional Commissioners responsible to the Home Secretary under his new *alias*, as "Minister of Home Security." Some attempt was made, in establishing these Regions, to secure that the same areas should be used for different purposes and by different departments. The Regional Commissioners'

Regions correspond approximately to the War Office's military defence areas, to the Divisions of the Ministry of Labour, to the regions of the Transport Ministry, to the new regional offices of the Ministries of Health, Food, Agriculture, and so on. Each Regional "capital" has become the home of a number of departmental offices besides those of the Commissioner himself; and there has been in this connection a certain amount of devolution from Whitehall. This does not apply to all departments—the Board of Education, for one, has no regional organisation—but it does extend to a good number, with varying degrees of practical decentralisation of powers.

All this, however, has very little to do with Regionalism as a method of securing larger and more appropriate units of local government. Wartime Regionalism has been, so far, decentralisation of national administrative departments, and has been wholly unaccompanied by any growth of democratic regional organs of government proceeding from the people. The Regional Commissioner is a bureaucrat appointed from the centre—a potential autocrat, in case of actual invasion; and he is not assisted by any sort of elected regional authority. He can, we believe, take counsel from time to time, if he so desires, with the Members of Parliament who sit for constituencies falling within his Region. But what do they know about the region's local government problems, and how much time can they spare to make themselves masters of its affairs? In practice, the Regional Commissioner consults whom he thinks fit; and there is no body to take thought with him for the affairs of the region as a whole.

Nor would it, under existing conditions, be possible to equip the Regional Commissioner with anything effective in the nature of a Regional Parliament. We have chosen, under war conditions, to "freeze" our institutions of local government, both by abolishing elections and by handing our many powers to wartime Emergency Committees. Delegations from the local councils to the regional centre would not be effective, because the best men want to stop at home in order to attend to urgent local affairs. Regional elections are hardly practicable, and would meet with the same difficulty. Moreover, many of the existing Regions, though they may be right from the standpoint of military requirements and the organisation of emergency services in case of invasion, are quite the wrong shape and size for eliciting that democratic regional sentiment without which they could not possibly build themselves up into effective units of democratic self-government. From this standpoint, can Devon and Cornwall be governed from Bristol, or Oxford and Portsmouth and Southampton find a common capital at Reading?

Before we go farther, let us remind ourselves that before 1939 the word "region" commonly meant, in connection with British local government, something utterly different from these new Regions over which the wartime Commissioners preside. We were familiar with Regional Town-planning Committees and other bodies which existed to plan town and country development over areas wider than those of single local authorities. But the "regions" covered by these bodies were tiny in comparison with the new Regions set up from Whitehall. They represented what geographers call "conurbations" and a belt of surrounding countryside: so that each big urban aggregation had a separate Regional Planning Committee, and a large number of such "regions" now fall within the boundaries of a single Region, *à la* Whitehall.

It is a misfortune that the same word has come to be used for these two essentially different things. If there is to be devolution from the centre of national administrative services, it is clearly necessary to limit the number of areas into which, for this purpose, the country is to be broken up. Otherwise, no real delegation of powers will be possible; for delegation implies the presence in each area of an official high enough up in the Civil Service hierarchy to be able to take important decisions without reference to Whitehall. But the areas suitable for this purpose are bound, at any rate in most parts of the country, to be much too large to serve as units for democratic local organisation. The case for creating a unified local government for Manchester and Salford and the other townships which together make up the Manchester "conurbation" is totally different from the case for having, somewhere in the North-West, a centre of delegated central administration more closely in touch with local needs and feelings than Whitehall. Areas of democratic local government must not be larger than areas of local sentiment and common need arising out of everyday local problems. The Town planning Regions, and not the Commissioners' Regions, are the basis on which we must seek to build up, from below, units of local government consistent with twentieth-century needs and conditions.

This, of course, does not preclude the creation of larger units of local government for particular purposes, where a particular service, such as electricity or water-supply or transport, needs administering over a larger area. But the authorities set up to manage such common services will have to be federal, and not unitary—that is, where they are not placed directly under national rather than local administration. For general purposes of local self-government the essential problem is that of bringing into existence the right basic units—right, that is, as large enough to meet modern technical needs, but not so large as to lose the benefit of local sentiment and feeling of close neighbourhood and community.

We must escape from that mental confusion which sees in the Commissioners' Regions not only the beginnings of a salutary devolution of the duties of Whitehall, but also the nucleus of a new type of authority destined to supersede the present organs of local government. Devolution is one thing, and the building of a better system of local government is quite another. They may work most advantageously together, but it is disastrous to muddle them up.

This danger of confusion arises mainly in connection with projects of reconstruction. Under war conditions it is highly desirable that certain key services, notably those connected with fire-fighting and civil defence generally, shall be organised over much larger areas than those of the existing local authorities, or even than the town-planning "regions" which include a number of separate administrative areas. They have to be so organised for obvious and imperative reasons of security; and, as the new organisation has to be improvised at a time when local government is half-paralysed, it is unavoidable that the new organisation should take a bureaucratic form. Such bureaucracy is an excellent thing, under the existing conditions; but we should beware of taking it as a model for the reorganisation of local government after the war. Similarly, it would be very sensible to abolish local rates, or at any rate greatly reduce them, for the war period, and to pay most of the costs of local government by grants in aid out of national funds. But it does not at all follow that we can afford to dispense, after the war, with independent sources of local finance, in the spending of which the citizens can feel a sense of freedom and responsibility; for, without this, local self-government will cease to be real, and bureaucracy will everywhere rule the roost.

This is not a plea for putting back local rates, when once they have been got rid of, but rather for an alternative basis for the self-financing of enlarged units of town-plus-country government, analogous to the town-planning "regions" rather than to the larger Regions formed for civil defence. Such units could afford a better civil service, in the lower as well as in the higher branches; and it would be well if there could be a constant flow of exchanges between this reformed municipal service and the central departments in Whitehall and in their new "regional" centres of delegated power. These and many other problems can be fruitfully considered as soon as we have realised plainly that our problem is twofold—decentralisation from Whitehall, and the building up from below of democratic organs of local government over areas coterminous with the realities of modern civic life.

A LONDON DIARY

THE elderly appearance of the Labour Party Conference (with the younger men away on various forms of service) does not account for its lack of vitality. The official decision to bar all resolutions from the Conference removed from the constituencies their usual feeling of participation. The only way of raising any subject was to "move the reference back," a cumbersome procedure on which few delegates care to embark, especially when it means that they will have the whole platform and the organised votes of the Trade Unions against them. The "peace by negotiation" group tried it, and after a skilful reply from Phil Baker, scored nineteen thousand votes against over two million. The two serious criticisms of the Government, as someone said, came, oddly enough, from members of the Executive, Harold Laski making a downright speech about propaganda and the Ministry of Information, and Barbara Gould pitching into the scandals about food and prices. She was perfectly right that people are prepared to put up with whatever shortages are necessary, provided everyone shares equally. Has anyone heard as much as a breath of complaint about the drastic rationing of clothes? Some of us began to urge for a full rationing system a year ago and we were told that it would be bad for "morale." Actually, it would have been good in every way, for morale as well as a way of relieving shipping space and labour for essential factories. Mrs. Gould's speech was refreshing; the unhappy thing was that delegates could not get up from the floor and air their local grievances. They spoke only about the more general question of conscripting property as well as life. One wanted to hear people

from heavily blitzed areas discussing the provision of accommodation for those who can no longer sleep at home and about the miserable position of many who stay behind. You will often find cases of several families living in one or two rooms in a house that has been partly destroyed. You will find the woman going out to shop and coming home tired out and wretched because, after waiting for a long time in a queue, she has been unable to get the meat she wanted or has had to come back before her turn came. These are the problems that really affect "morale"; danger stiffens people, but continuous discomfort and any feeling of neglect has the opposite result. Delegates should have gone away from a Labour Party Conference with the feeling that they had explained the realities of life under war conditions to busy Ministers and that organisation for common people would improve.

Mr. Laski properly criticised British propaganda and was technically correct in directing his attack against the Ministry of Information. But of course he knows that the M. of I. has always been a whipping boy for sins of omission and commission for which it is only very partially responsible. The Ministry of Information is no more than a service department for the Service Departments. It cannot initiate information which it does not possess, and even when it does know something, its publicity is held up and muddled by Whitehall. Something like a revolt is going on at the top of the organisation. Responsible people declare that unless the Ministry is given more power it is impossible for them to carry on. The usual order of events is that the Ministry prepares to meet an impending situation and warns the Service Departments—which include Home Security and 10 Downing Street—of the danger. They are not allowed to carry out their proposals; the results they feared take place and they get all the blame. This happens continually; I could repeat case after case from my personal knowledge. A lot of talk has been going round about having a Labour representative near the top of the Ministry. It has been suggested that Harold Nicolson, for instance, might give place to a Labour Under-Secretary, or that a second Under-Secretary chosen by Labour might be appointed. These proposals are quite futile if the Ministry remains in its present absurd position. There is still no Government policy about propaganda; the Minister himself (I am not now discussing whether he or those with him are the best possible people for the job) should be a member of the War Cabinet, and propaganda should be recognised as a War Department on an equal footing with the three Service Departments. Unless that is done, most of the attacks on the Ministry are misplaced and no internal reorganisation to include Labour representation would have any effect except, of course, once more to associate Labour with a dud show.

* * *

In one of the recent numbers of *Die Zeitung*, P. H. Frankel draws a telling parallel between the Napoleonic war and our own. Like the ageing heirs of Foch's armies, the Prussians of 1806, tradition-bound after the victories of Frederic the Great, were overthrown in a few days by Napoleon's revolutionary tactics and massed artillery. Like Pétain and Darlan in our day, Frederic William III of Prussia could not do enough in surrendering and collaborating with "the Corsican Usurper," calling on his subjects, in the name of national unity and discipline, to provide arms and soldiers for Napoleon's Russian venture. As to-day, a small band of patriots raised the banner of revolt; like de Gaulle, so the Prussian general von Wartenburg took the decisive step: broke his obedience to his monarch and went over to the Russians, Napoleon's enemies. From that day, the German liberation movement swept forward until even the Prussian king had to make the following proclamation, with its strangely modern ring:

> The peace which robbed us of half our realm yet brought us no blessings, for its wounds were greater than those of war. Our country was sucked dry, its main fortresses occupied, the skill of its artisans and peasants paralysed.
>
> Freedom of trade was forbidden, thus destroying the source of our well-being, leaving us a prey to impoverishment.
>
> By most scrupulously fulfilling my obligations, I had hoped to bring relief to my people and convince the Emperor that it would be to his own advantage to leave us independent. But my sincerest efforts have been frustrated by arrogance and bad faith, and we saw clearly how the Emperor's Peace Treaty, even more than this war, must slowly destroy us. Now the moment has come when any illusion about our condition is at an end.

How easily this speech might have been made by Marshal Pétain, had British influence prevailed at Vichy, and not, contrary to the Napoleonic parallel, that of the Nazis.

* * *

Everyone who knew Hugh Walpole agrees that he was a quite unusually charming, kindly and generous man. He was not a great novelist, but he wrote some capital books. Even his highbrow critics admitted that *Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill*, written with the freshness of early experience, was an admirable satire, and no one denies that *Fortitude* and the *Dark Forest* were powerful novels. His later books brought him even greater success; he made money; he had many interesting and affectionate friends; he received a knighthood and was widely popular. What more could a man want? Here would seem to be all the elements for congratulation. And yet everyone speaks of him with a slight smile. "Poor Hugh," they say, and shake their heads in sympathetic and amiable commiseration. Why? I think the explanation is that Hugh Walpole always aspired to an intellectual eminence that was not within his capacity, that he knew that he could have written better if he had thought less of what people would say of what he wrote, and that he developed, in consequence, an over-acute sensitivity to criticism. He was deeply wounded by criticism; he wanted everyone to be equally impressed. The stalls, the gallery, the pit and the sacred row reserved equally for the critics from Printing House Square, the *Daily Mirror*, and Bloomsbury, had all to praise him before he was satisfied. A sneer cut him to the heart and he let people know that he suffered. The blow that hurt him most deeply was the rather cruel satire in Somerset Maugham's brilliant book, *Cakes and Ale*. I have heard the story from various friends; how the book came into his hands one night at bedtime; with what excitement he looked forward to reading it before he went to sleep; how he propped it on the mantel-piece as he undressed, and how gradually he realised that the young biographer, so delicately dissected by Maugham, was really himself. He sat on the bed half dressed and read till he knew the worst; having read, he could not sleep that night and perhaps for many other nights as well. Harold Nicolson, who was much attached to Hugh Walpole, adds an illuminating story. He had to review *Cakes and Ale*, and wishing to avoid hurting his friend's feelings he ended his article by saying that some, no doubt, would look for pictures of living persons in this novel, but that Somerset Maugham was obviously too rich and experienced a delineator of character to resort to any such crude device. Obviously Maugham did not intend anyone to think that the distinguished writer who dies in the book was meant to be Thomas Hardy, or to imagine that the author who writes his biography was a picture of—John Drinkwater! Never was tact more ungratefully received. When Nicolson met Drinkwater shortly afterwards, Drinkwater cut him dead, and when he next saw Walpole, Hugh remarked that he would not have expected Harold to make the ridiculous mistake of confusing him with John Drinkwater!

* * *

Not content with burning books in Germany, Hitler has scored some notable triumphs over civilisation by burning books in this country too. Authors, publishers, wholesalers and booksellers have all lost heavily. Some authors have lost the only MS. copies of unpublished books that were just going to the printers, and others (Rose Macaulay among them) have had the miserable experience of seeing the destruction of notes of MS. that covered years of research. The burning of libraries is a tragedy of a rather different character. Sometimes the books burnt are irreplaceable; in other cases the loss is serious because the library is of a specialised character, badly needed for students and for reference purposes. Some of the best libraries in London have gone. Amongst them, I am sorry to see, is the library of Birkbeck, which thus pays for the privilege of being the only wholly unevacuated college of the University of London. Of a remarkable collection of some 40,000 books, less than 4,000 remain, and many are so sodden with water and blackened by fire that they will require cleansing and (often) rebinding before they can be of use again. The languages were particularly hard hit: French books, German books, Italian books, Spanish books, and practically all the Classics, having been destroyed. If anybody feels inclined to do what little he can to repair this loss, either by the gift or the loan of books for the duration, he is asked to communicate with the Librarian, Birkbeck College, Fetter Lane, E.C.4.

* * *

Even in pre-war days we were given deplorably little news about the Colonies, and now, although the Colonial problem is one of the big issues of the conflict, we hear still less of developments in those areas. The Fabian Colonial Bureau, which was established six months ago, is therefore performing a valuable service in assuming responsibility for a regular publication in Colonial affairs. The issue of the first number of *Empire* under its charge coincides with the final mopping up in Abyssinia, a campaign in which Colonial troops have played a large part. In view of this it is not encouraging to read that West African troops are kept out of cinemas in Nairobi by the colour bar, but it is encouraging to learn that, as a result of the publicity given to this and other complaints, the Secretary of War was constrained to give assurances about further measures for the welfare of African

troops in the West African theatre of war. The journal is a bi-monthly, and the annual subscription of 2s. for six issues can be placed at the Fabian Bookshop, 11 Dartmouth Street, S.W.1.

* * *

"People must realise," I was told in well-informed circles, "that in this war of brilliant evacuations we have to supply the enemy as well as ourselves. If we are to hand over to the Germans the equipment of a few divisions every few months, the Ministry of Supply will have to put their backs into it, otherwise we cannot guarantee delivery. Our good faith is at stake, and our reputation for honourable dealing is one of the things we are fighting for." CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

Our prize of 5/- for the contribution at the head of this column goes this week to E. J. Chaplin.

All cuttings should be addressed to "This England," 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

A man of 67 who 55 years ago stole a 6d. cake and was sentenced to 12 strokes of the birch, 14 days' imprisonment and four years in a reformatory school, has now been bound over at Clerkenwell for stealing bedding. He had 52 previous convictions.—Report in *Daily Telegraph*.

Lieut.-Col. H. Jones Mortimer, commander of Taunton Home Guard, told subscribers of Taunton Vale Foxhounds at Taunton to-day "to stop hunting entirely now would be acting in a spirit of defeatism which would please Hitler. We should keep the flag of hunting flying if possible and see Hitler to hell."—*Western Independent*.

Wanted by young gentlemen, young lady desiring to evacuate; bungalow near Newbury.—Advt. in *The Lady*.

Trucking with popery and popedom, which is the greatest enemy of the Protestant British Empire, certainly offends God, Who will be our greatest Ally if we do His will. "National sins meet always with national chastisement." The British Government, having accepted papal apostolic appointment, must meet with Divine anger.—*Ulster Protestant*.

So great, in fact, are the opportunities offered to us that, as society disintegrates beneath our feet, we must ask ourselves seriously whether, in choosing this method of travel, we are not adopting the one course which may yet save the world from catastrophe. In hitch-hiking we are presented with a challenge. We face a crisis in our lives—a crisis calling for decision.—*The Student Movement*.

LITTLE ENEMY ACTIVITY

[The Mother of Parliaments has once more rejected the plea for family allowances. *News Item*.]

When the Nazi might is shattered
By our armament titanic
And the world, though slightly battered
Rescued from the hordes Germanic,
All our hopes may be defeated
By a more deep-rooted danger
And our progeny unseated
By the little Nazi stranger,
Though we know the whole creation
Insufficiently commodious
For a rising generation
So exceptionally odious.
While the foe we may outdistance
In the engines of destruction
They imperil our existence
By their baby mass-production,
And if Britons still diminish
While the Nazis still re-double
We may question at the finish
If the war was worth the trouble,
For while Britain's lawful-wedded
State in converse confidential
That no prospect is more dreaded
Than their parenthood potential,
Nazi Hausfraus ever busy
Charge again the bulging cradle,
Rivalling the record dizzy
Of expectant Hitler Mädel,
While the German State and Party
Trends to race-decline have mastered
And extend a welcome hearty
To the little Nazi bastard
And conceive a mass-offensive
For our ultimate submersion
By the fostering intensive
Of progenitive exertion.
Can we face so grave a peril
Or a future more horrific
If the civilised are sterile
While the savage is prolific?
With our numbers still declining
What avails our moral merit,
If the world of our designing
Little Nazis shall inherit?

SAGITTARIUS

SPEAKING TO THE GERMANS

SOME weeks ago Raymond Mortimer published in this journal an illuminating account of the B.B.C.'s successful efforts at "Speaking to the French." The B.B.C.'s European services, which have been developed on a very large scale during the last twelve months, try to find the ears of most of the suppressed nations on the Continent, but none of these broadcasts in foreign languages is more important than those which are addressed to the largest of all the countries enslaved by the Nazis, to Germany herself.

The general public knows little about the difficulties confronting those who want to "speak to the Germans." The Frenchman, Dutchman, or Pole, who addresses his countrymen through the English microphone, knows that there is a community of sentiments and interests which he shares with his listeners: his fears are their fears, and his hopes are their hopes. National sentiment itself is the powerful lever which he can use in order to combat the political inertia and apathy which the Nazis are deliberately fostering among the suppressed peoples. He does not want to adjust his broadcasts to selected social groups among the nations addressed: the Frenchman as a Frenchman, the Pole as a Pole, is his listener.

But who are "the Germans" to whom we want to speak? Is there a common denominator of "secret opinion," a sentiment or impulse shared by all German listeners to which we can appeal with any degree of confidence that we shall obtain a response? It would be folly to envisage only the determined anti-Nazi as a potential listener; we must, and the B.B.C. tries to, make our voices penetrate to the apathetic majority as well as to particular groups of Germans. Even when broadcasting to those who are irreconcilably opposed to the regime, it would be wrong to assume that the Socialist worker who has kept alive the traditions of his movement is interested in the kind of broadcast that appeals to the disappointed intellectual or to the Catholic peasant whose hatred of the Nazis is nourished from entirely different sources.

When the B.B.C. started their German services, and for a considerable period after the outbreak of the war, there seemed to be little realisation of these difficulties. Those early attempts were often clumsy, and nearly always inadequate. There is simply no comparison between the linguistic and political quality of those early broadcasts and the vastly extended and improved programmes of to-day. There are now altogether eleven German broadcasts daily, comprising a broadcasting time of four hours and five minutes. An attempt is being made to "direct" a number of these programmes to selected audiences. Thus, the two half-hourly "dawn" broadcasts at 6 and 6.30 a.m. (German summer time) are naturally intended for the workman who is on the point of leaving his home for the factory and who wants to get the latest news and views for the information of his fellow workers. Twice a week the half-hourly broadcasts at 8 p.m. are specially devoted to "Labour Programmes," and once a week there is, at that time, a programme for peasants. A comparatively new, and very successful, venture are the Forces Programmes, broadcast twice daily, from 6 to 6.15 p.m. and from 2 to 2.15 a.m. The B.B.C. is probably right in assuming that it is less risky for the soldier, especially in the occupied areas, than for the civilian in Germany to listen-in to our broadcasts. Oddly enough the war itself, high problems of strategy as well as the daily worries of the soldier, offer a platform from which "soldier" can "speak to soldier." On the whole, the regular feature "*Soldat spricht zu Soldat*" is among the best things the B.B.C.'s German services have produced so far. The reading out of lists of prisoners is a very important item in these as in other broadcasts.

The early afternoon programme from 2 to 2.30 p.m. is mainly addressed to the middle classes, civil servants, intellectuals, etc. It gives the listeners comprehensive surveys on political and economic subjects, and has on its cultural side a strong religious bias. One of its objects is to remind the Germans of their great cultural tradition, and it often uses anniversaries of births or deaths of famous Germans

as a pretext for talks on such lines. It is an open question whether the magnitude of whatever there may be of intellectual and religious opposition in Germany justifies the amount of broadcasting time devoted to these programmes, and whether the type of listener to whom these broadcasts are addressed is likely to risk his life in order to hear a talk on Wilhelm von Humboldt or on Karl Barth. The quality of the talks varies considerably, but what is remarkable is the seriousness with which cultural and religious problems are approached by the B.B.C. Those responsible for this side of the service are allowed to speak to Germans about German matters in an earnest way, and it does not seem as if any attempt was made to introduce a theatrical element and to overburden the programmes with "features." Evidently this kind of propaganda is very much in line with the general trend of the B.B.C.

The same cannot be said of the Labour Talks. The "powers that be" seem to be convinced that the masses must always be given a bit of entertainment. It is true that there are regular talks by trade unionists and leading Socialists in this country; there is also in the evening labour broadcast a news bulletin with items of special interest to workers. But there is still too much "reportage," and despite recent improvement, even now too little serious talk about German social problems. Is it merely a coincidence that the anti-Christian features of the regime are far more outspokenly discussed than its capitalist character? There is a certain timidity in these labour programmes, and a lack of realisation that here at least there is a common platform, the fight for social justice, on which a large part of the British people can speak to a most important sector of the German nation. The battle against the Legend of German Socialism can only be won by those to whom Socialism means something and who have a clear conception of what Socialism means. But in the May Day programme of the B.B.C. the word "Socialism" occurred only once and that quite inconspicuously. I do not suggest that it is the fault of those who draft these programmes.

The problem of "features" has become a very serious matter of late, not only in the labour broadcasts. There is, every afternoon, a half-hourly programme devoted almost entirely to jazz music, interspersed with news. The assumption is that many people in Germany, and especially women, are starving for jazz, so much so that they are prepared to risk their freedom in order to hear it, and that this is the only way of obtaining their attention for news. Recently a serious programme for women was introduced (or rather re-introduced) from 3 to 3.15 p.m., and I cannot help feeling that this is more likely to be a success than the "commercial advertising" methods used an hour later. A bit of dance music every now and then will do no harm, but at the moment some of the programmes reveal a contempt of the masses and for the musical tastes of Germans which is quite unjustified.

Some of the features—those with a political background—are very good indeed. There is Frau Wernicke. She is grand. The Berlin washerwoman who has never become a Nazi, who has kept alive all her natural wit and intelligence and uses it to enlighten her neighbours. A few months ago she became so outspoken that she had to go to a concentration camp for a couple of months, but now she is back, having been released on the promise that she would use her remarkable gifts to make Nazi propaganda among her friends. This she does so marvellously that those of us who listen-in regularly are disappointed every Sunday evening on which we don't hear her humane and kindly voice.

Then there are Kurt and Willi—Kurt the "naive" Nazi, a secondary school teacher, of course, and Willi the "cynic," an official in the propaganda ministry. Kurt swallows every lump of official propaganda, but Willi gives him a taste of Goebbels' *arcana imperii*. Kurt's indignation is as delightful as Willi's impatience with the product of his own efforts. Excellent.

A few weeks ago a new "character" put in an appearance, Lance-Corporal Adolf Hirnschal, a German version of Schwejk. Hirnschal reads to one of his comrades his letters to his wife: "Dearest Amalia, most beloved spouse." He is not really the pompous ass he pretends to be, but quite a shrewd observer of the common soldier's grievances, his fears, his doubts, and, above all, his terrific boredom—and he expresses it in the intonation of the Magdeburg-Halle district, which sounds half exasperating and half comic to the German ear. Irresistible fun turned into first-class propaganda, and superbly read.

The weekly "*Vormarsch der Freiheit*," a kind of March of Time, is a far more problematic affair. The dramatisation of an outstanding event or development is nearly always good when there is an event to dramatise. Thus, the dramatic version of the Lofoten raid was a high light, and quite recently there was a scene of a treason trial before a German court martial in Belgium which sounded genuine and was deeply moving. But occasionally there are lapses, like a fictitious story of an upheaval among the Papuas (meant to symbolise the Nazi upheaval) or a dramatised version of Mr. Churchill's life, a very unnecessary attempt to imitate the most preposterous kind of Nazi propaganda.

The propaganda value of these features must not be exaggerated, and the backbone of the programmes are, and always must be, the news. Here the service leaves much to be desired. The News, which takes up about fifteen minutes of every programme, is still far too much a translation of the English News. It includes features which cannot possibly be of interest to the German, and it does not include enough about Germany herself. There has, however, been some improvement, such as, for example, an increasing number of replies to Nazi lies, and short "inscripts," i.e. comments on news. An independent news service for the German bulletin, however, is most urgently required. There has been an occasional tendency at minimising our reverses, for example at the beginning of the Balkan campaign, but on the whole losses are reported without restraint, and this is very important indeed.

Certain propaganda lines run through all the news and all the talks. They constitute what the authorities regard as the "common denominator." There is, first and foremost, the element of fear. "Remember this is a totalitarian war, and remember, too, that it was Hitler who invented it! The R.A.F. is growing. Some of your towns have already been made to feel what totalitarian war means, and the others will learn it soon." There is, secondly, the constant drawing of parallels with the last war: "Victories, victories, victories, until final defeat." This is coupled with the ever-repeated reminder that "Hitler can only win if he wins in the West, either by invasion or by blockade—and why does he not invade, we are waiting." Most important: the American line. Most of us agree that there cannot be enough about America. Ever since 1918 the Germans have had "*le cauchemar de l'Amérique*." Most of them are deeply convinced that America beat Germany in the last war and that the U.S.A. is invincible. So there cannot be enough about U.S.A., though the need for American aid should never be over-emphasised.

And there are, finally, the "*Kriegsmaschine*" and the "*Raubordnung*." These are particularly prominent in the soldiers, peasant and labour talks. The *Kriegsmaschine*—that is, the Nazi colossus which enslaves all Germans and all Europeans, the Minotaur to whom thousands of young lives and all freedom and happiness of Europe are being sacrificed. He (or it) is the common enemy we are all fighting, "we and you as well." And the *Raubordnung*—that is, the new order in Europe which is being built up in order to feed the *Kriegsmaschine*. "Do you realise, you Germans, that every Polish, Czech, Danish, and French child hates the very name of Germany and the Germans?" Do you understand, you German soldiers, why it is that you don't get a friendly word from the Norwegians or the Dutch? Do you cherish the icy loneliness that surrounds you? Do you know, German workmen, that you are being exploited at the very moment that you are forced to exploit other nations, and why?"

The noblest of all the manifold aims of our propaganda to Germany is to create in Germany a feeling of European solidarity against Nazism.

No one can say with any degree of certitude to what extent this propaganda has been effective. We usually distinguish between two types of listeners—the casual and the regular, and we are inclined to believe that, apart from the forces, the former belongs to the masses and the latter to the political élite, especially among the working class. If this is true, it can be said that so far the B.B.C. has done good work for the casual listener, but that it could be of much greater service to the politically conscious opposition which, after all, represents the Germany of to-morrow, but, and this is the most formidable of all the obstacles that beset this most difficult task, we cannot hope to get the confidence of this élite as long as we don't tell them what they have to expect after Hitler's defeat. As long as we allow Hitler to conjure up at will the ghosts of President Wilson and the Treaty of Versailles, as long as we don't present to the Germans a clear picture of the alternative to the Nazi regime—so long all our words about freedom and civilisation will ring hollow in the ears of the best, that is the most critical, of our German listeners.

There may be all sorts of arguments against the publication of War Aims, but let us be clear about this: we cannot really speak to the Germans as effectively as we should unless we tell them honestly and sincerely and in concrete terms what kind of a world it is in which we want them to live.

RICHARD WINNER

THE VIRTUE OF BEING SHABBY

THOUGH not a man of heroic temper, I was aware of a feeling of kinship with Alan Breck when I read Mr. Oliver Lyttelton's tribute at the beginning of the week to the man who is badly dressed. Mr. Lyttelton, speaking possibly with the enthusiasm of a convert, not only gave us who do not mind appearing in shabby garments certificates of character as good citizens, but almost suggested that we deserved the V.C. "Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy," was the advice of Polonius to Laertes; "but not expressed in fancy; rich, not gaudy." Mr. Lyttelton, in announcing the rationing of clothes, expresses an entirely contrary opinion. So hostile is he to the notion of a man's being well dressed that the *Times* gave its remarks on the subject the heading: "Shabby Garments Honourable."

This may seem to many people a revolutionary theory. Yet many of us were convinced of its truth even in childhood. How often we protested against the conventional tyranny of the clothes-brush! How sulkily we stood while a nurse with a flannel dipped in hot water removed a jam-stain from a perfectly wearable suit! We ourselves knew that a hole in a stocking did not matter, but our elders, steeped in the Polonius philosophy, insisted before letting us leave the house on dressing us to look as if we had just come out of a bandbox.

This was well meant on their part, but it led to an enormous waste of money on unnecessary things, such as special Sunday clothes and gloves, and to an equally enormous waste of time in having us made presentable. It also aroused in many of the young the seeds of vanity in dress. Abandoning all hope of successful rebellion, they swung round to the opposite extreme and began to dress even better than their parents hoped. A boy with whom I was at school used to wear two white shirts a day; another drove his father to distraction by his mania for buying ties; another used to brush his clothes every morning before setting out for school. Thus, a race of young dandies came into existence, and to meet their needs in later life a vast number of people had to be withdrawn from productive labour to make superfluous coats, shirts, hats, socks and shoes. Unnecessary buttons had to be put on the sleeves of coats, unnecessary braid down the legs of evening dress trousers, and cloth was wasted on making ordinary trousers so long that the bottoms had to be permanently turned up. It was, in short, a world of wild extravagance, in which many men dressed not for comfort or decency, but mainly for the love of dress.

Women were even more extravagant in their love of dress than men. Trained to think of their clothes from childhood, they learnt the lesson so well that some of the principal streets in the great cities were largely devoted to clothing them as no rational human being would wish to be clothed. Magazines and weekly papers lived by providing them with new reasons for buying more and more hats, frocks and garments of all sorts. Dress became a decoration instead of what it was meant to be—a shield from the weather. To such heights did the interest of women in clothes for their own sake attain, that Ascot was for many years in danger of being turned from the greatest of race-meetings into a dress-parade. It has been said on good authority that no woman seen in the Royal Enclosure at Ascot had ever worn out a dress in her life. To see a woman dressed in shabby clothes in the Ascot paddock was impossible. Never would you see so much as an ink-spot on a skirt; never even a broken hat-brim. All was luxury, the disease of a world that, instead of dressing to live, lived to dress.

Now that Mr. Lyttelton has spoken we shall, no doubt, see a great change. If the new fashion of shabbiness sweeps Society as other fashions have swept it, we may yet see the *Times*, in its description of the dresses at race-meetings, commending the Duchess of Abinger because she appeared with a large patch on her right sleeve and the Marchioness of Ockley for wearing a dingy old bonnet that looked as if it had belonged to her grandmother and used as a football on a wet day by her grandfather. Men, too, will get rid of the deadly monotony of the perfectly cut and beautifully brushed morning coat. Jeeves will insist on Bertie Wooster's wearing his oldest clothes, glossy and green about the shoulders, and the most aged of his shirts with frayed cuffs. To appear in a new dress or in a new suit at a fashionable gathering will be regarded as an unpardonable breach of convention. A woman who finds herself compelled to buy a new dress will, before daring to go out, rumple it and take other steps to make it look as if she had worn it for years. A man similarly compelled to refurnish his wardrobe will ask his tailor to insert a patch or two, and so save him from the shame of being well-dressed. I once knew a man who had such a hatred of new Trilby hats that when his wife made him buy one, he always sat on it in order to make it look as if it were an old friend. We used to think him an eccentric, but is it not better to regard him as a pioneer of the modern virtue of shabbiness?

It is too much to expect, however, that every one will become a convert to the new mode immediately. The craving for clothes probably has as firm a hold on many people as the craving for cigarettes. Just as there are chain-smokers, so there are chain-dressers—people who spend a great part of their lives changing from one costume into another. Imagine what these victims of a once reputable passion must have felt when they read Mr. Lyttelton's ultimatum and realised that they could not now buy so much as a new pair of stockings without surrendering some of their margarine coupons. And only sixty-six coupons allowed for the entire year! What could the best-dressed woman in London—there are quite a number of her—do with sixty-six coupons? Eleven coupons are needed for one dress alone. A woman who knows anything about clothes could, I am sure, get through her sixty-six coupons in a week. I think Mr. Lyttelton has been a little harsh on the clothes-fanciers—a class that, with all its faults, has contributed much to the pleasures of the eye and of the imagination. His purpose, we are told, is to ensure equality of sacrifice, but what equality of sacrifice can there be between a woman who all her life has dressed for show and a woman who has dressed merely for utility? What equality, indeed, between Bertie Wooster and myself?

When I read through the official list of the rationed articles of apparel and of the number of coupons to be given up for each of them, I wondered, not how I could make sixty-six coupons last a year, but how I could get through them in the course of a year. The list begins with "unlined mackintosh or cape." Well, I could willingly go through life without a mackintosh, lined or unlined, and, as for a cape, I can dispense with that as easily as with an umbrella. Next comes an overcoat, and I have always maintained that, if one were permitted to dress as one pleased, one could go on wearing the same overcoat for ever. I have had overcoats with rips in them and with buttons that did not match, but I have never yet possessed an overcoat that did not serve its purpose in more or less keeping out the cold and the rain. If I bought a new overcoat, it was always for respectability's sake; never for the sake of protection against the weather. By refraining from buying an overcoat or an unlined mackintosh in the present year I see that I shall save twenty-five coupons. I shall save another thirteen coupons by denying myself a new "coat, jacket or blazer, or other like garment." There was a time when I should have liked to wear a blazer, but it has gone by. As for a jacket, that, like an overcoat, lasts, roughly speaking, for ever. Then I save five more coupons by continuing to wear my present waistcoat, perfectly serviceable, but condemned as disreputable several years ago.

Trousers are another matter. Trousers must be complete to inspire one with self-confidence. Patched trousers, somehow, unlike a patched coat, seldom look honourable. Perhaps I shall break into my coupons for the first time in order to buy a new pair of trousers; that will be eight coupons, or, if the trousers are made of corduroy, only five. Shorts come next on the list, valued at four coupons, but as I do not hike or play football, I can dispense with these, and, unless I am conscripted for some form of labour at which I should be useless, I have no need of "overalls or dungarees or like garments." The dressing-gown, as an eight-coupon purchase, seems to me to be an unwarrantable luxury, as are leggings, spats, goloshes, gloves and mittens. In fact, I am ready to forswear the purchase of any of the articles of clothing in the list for a year, with the exception, perhaps, of trousers, shoes, socks and handkerchiefs.

To buy these I calculate I shall not have to use more than thirty-three of my sixty-six coupons.

As I have said, however, it would not be fair for the Government to base a rationing system for dress on me. Other men long for spick-and-span clothes as, if razors were unprocurable, they would long for a clean shave. To pass a tailor's shop and realise that the stocks within are as far beyond their reach as the exhibits in a public museum must be a painful experience. In the next few months, no doubt, we shall see many women gazing wistfully into the windows of hat-shops and dress-shops, dreaming of a Paradise in which the unrestricted freedom to buy clothes is one of the established human rights. In the same way, those of us who smoke like looking into the windows of tobacco-shops and seeing dummy boxes of our favourite brand of cigarettes, though we know that the cigarettes cannot be obtained within. Mingled with the pain of deprivation, there is the pleasure of gazing at an imaginary world of abundance and of hoping